

Taking care of a child with Chickenpox



Chickenpox is a contagious infection caused by the varicella virus. It causes a rash of itchy blisters on the skin, mouth, and throat.

Things you can do to help your child feel better and less itchy:

- Give cool (not cold) baths.
- Try baking soda baths – add 1/4 cup of baking soda to the bath water
- Give oatmeal baths – Put 1/2 to 1 cup of oatmeal in a clean stocking or sock and swish through the bath water until the water is cloudy.
- Put calamine lotion on itchy blisters.
- Use acetaminophen or ibuprofen for fever or aches and pains.
- Keep your child's nails trimmed short so your child won't tear his or her skin if your child scratches.
- If you give your child Benadryl® for itching, be sure to follow the directions so you give your child the right dose for his or her age.

Never give aspirin to a child with chickenpox! Aspirin use during chickenpox may cause Reye's syndrome. Reye's Syndrome can cause brain damage.

When a child has chickenpox, parents need to watch for signs that the child is having other problems. Call your child's health care provider if:

- Blisters become red, painful, and/or ooze thick green or yellow pus.
- Itching is very bad, even after cool baths and Calamine lotion.
- Your child has a fever greater than 101° Fahrenheit by mouth or 100° Fahrenheit under the arm.

- Your child has a bad headache, or vomiting.
- Bright light hurts your child's eyes or there are blisters in their eyes.
- You see bleeding under your child's skin.
- Your child has bad pain or swelling in their joints.
- Your child has a cough, chest pain, or problems breathing.

Your child may need to be seen in the emergency room if he or she is having any of the following problems:

- Difficulty breathing
- Sleepiness and difficulty in waking up
- Confused or combative manner
- Seizure
- A fever of 103° Fahrenheit or higher, a bad headache, or vomiting.

How to keep chickenpox from spreading:

- Keep your child away from other people when he or she has chickenpox.
- Wash your hands often when you care for your child. Have your child wash his or her hands often too.
- Have your child use a tissue when coughing or sneezing, then throw the tissue away.

Call before taking your child to his or her health care provider. The clinic or office may want you to take your child somewhere other than the regular waiting room so other children won't be exposed to the chickenpox virus.

Parent Information
School Age Children

Taking care of a child with chickenpox (continued)



Children usually go back to school or child care when all of the following have occurred:

- All the blisters have dried up,
- The child feels well, and
- The child's temperature is normal.

Brand names used in this document are only meant to be examples. DHEC does not endorse any of the brand names in this document.

Information from DHEC's Child Care and School Exclusion Lists: Exclude children with varicella (chickenpox) until all lesions have dried and crusted (usually six days after onset of rash).

For additional information about exclusion when a child has chickenpox, see the DHEC Child Care and School Exclusion Lists of Contagious or Communicable Diseases at <http://www.scdhec.gov/health/disease/exclusion.htm>

Child's Name _____

School Nurse _____

Date _____

School _____

School Phone Number (_____) _____



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